

REWRITE



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DO YOU KNOW HOW TO COUNT TIME?

One of the most important elements in any story, whether it be a short story or novel, is that of Time. Someone has defined a story as a passage through Time and Space. It is exactly that. No matter how much the material concerns the inner truths of the characters involved, it must as a story start and end at a fixed point and place. It may be a result of events that happened much earlier in relation to the element of Time. Thus, a story is a blend of what happens in a Present period of time and grows out of the happenings in the Past.

Obviously, in a fairly advanced or sophisticated civilization a story can be a rather complex synthesis of the two spheres. And since with the aid of our mind's eye we are able to shift back and forth at will in our real life from Present to Past, there are a vast range of infinitely complex patterns a writer can dream up. He can have his people reflect and think dully about the Past; or he can have them fade back into a long or several broken flashbacks. He can even call up a momentary flash of remembrance or insight that cannot be described as a scene. The way the sun lit up the maple tree beside the old farmhouse on a certain May morning. A clever craftsman can break scenes into two parts & separate these in the flow of the continuity.

The reader and the textbooks place no restrictions on what an author can and may do. The one clause that the reader has a privileged right to insert in the contract is the condition that the author be crystal clear. He can break up the chronological passage of time into whatever patterns of dramatic time he wishes to. But he must make his movement from one place to another, from one period, in the time sequence, to another so clear a reader will be able to follow him with very small expenditure of energy.

In my experience this is something that a great many writers have thought very little about. Their mss. are proof that they don't think this factor through carefully. Elva & I have read countless stories in which background for the story, and the Time factor, is defined perfunctorily or vaguely in a first paragraph and then not mentioned again literally for pages. What is worse, the reader wakes up suddenly to find that he has drifted back into a flashback or a different environment and viewpoint with no perceptible transition.

As I have hinted in the previous paragraph, the trouble seems to arise because so many, many writers (1) have no definite philosophy or policy in handling time; and (2) haven't learned the necessity for being clear, definite and clean-cut in making every transition visual to the reader. Actors work hour after hour to build the continuity of a few

important gestures. They devise a system, a series of lines, gestures, facial pantomime. They number each step, each dramatic pause. They count: "You can't do this to me!" (one) right foot up on the stairway. (two) "You—miserable scoundrel!" (three) arms forward, fists clenched. Etc. They walk laboriously, stepping through a routine until they surely have it down pat. Then they speed it up, blur the obvious pattern and make the fight look genuine. But writers seldom go through and develop a routine as meticulously.

One of the most obvious weaknesses of the inexperienced writer lies in his handling of flashbacks and transitions. It takes a great deal too many words to get back from "dramatic present" to "dramatic past", and inexperienced writers include too much material in their transitions. Instead of moving the MC directly from the heroine's home to that big party or ball she has been dreaming all about for weeks, the young writer takes her down over the steps, into the taxi, along a busy street, into the powder-room, etc. The reader has to trail along, bored to death.

If you will read the next story you like, you will be surprised at the number of real holes in it. The author builds up a climax, then cuts directly into the action of another scene. (In this article I want to remain on the level of theory and point out issues rather than detail, because it is very easy to become confused. But in a follow up I'll try to give specific examples.) You see, the theory of good cutting is based on two considerations. You have to cut to speed a line of interest that runs all the way through a spine or spinal cord in a human body. Then, you have to cut minor detail to speed movement in the individual parts of a story. In good dialogue there are also "holes", which are never noticed by the reader. This is because the reader hears the dialogue just as if it were being spoken aloud. The intonations, overtones and emotional inflections, you see, carry over. They bind the speeches together. It is the same with transitions.

To get the full realization of this principle, go backstage sometime when your amateur play group is doing a play. Listen without being able to see, the interplay of actors and audience. It seems jerky, a series of explosions of emotion and response. You do not think it possible that you ever could sit in a darkened auditorium and be entranced by the swift emotional sweep of the story. But you were a part of the play then, a member of the audience. So, after you've listened to a production in the wings, go back into the auditorium. Watch the same show as it unrolls in front of you. Observe the audience, how it reacts and how the lines are paced. Then shut your eyes and just listen. Stage plays are best because the medium uses human beings in the life, and well trained actors at that. But you learn a lot from catching a movie that way too. It's amazing.

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<u>KEEP</u>	<u>William E. Harris,</u>	<u>BRING</u>
<u>AMERICA</u>	<u>Elva Ray Harris,</u>	<u>PEACE TO</u>
<u>FREE!</u>	<u>Editors.</u>	<u>THE WORLD</u>

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CHANGE OF ADDRESS—we cannot be responsible for changes not received in the office—ONE MONTH in advance of taking effect. Whenever possible, please give exact date of change. Prompt renewals help us to serve you better.

THE ISSUE IS CLEAR

This month as millions of Americans pay a reckoning with the income tax collector, the basic and fundamental issue of our times is abundantly clear. For reasons of their own, certain of our leaders have greatly overdone the Russian bug-a-boo. No matter how powerful, no nation can reasonably expect to dominate the entire world by breeding fear and ill-will in all of its neighbors. We have only to keep our powder dry and our heritage of courage high. God is on the side of men believing sincerely in Him.

Russia may well be as dangerous as we are led to believe. Any heavily armed dictator, be he a thug or head of a nation, is dangerous. But let us not forget that the unrest, the persecution behind the iron curtain does presage an armed force in a poor position to wage a victorious war. Let us remember that our own armed forces, and the business companies profiting by their continued activity, are conducting their annual drive for a swollen budget. And let us never forget the fact that men who have access to \$30,000,000, 000 annually, are only going to give up the privilege with extreme reluctance.

The real danger to our ideals and culture now, as probably the greatest living general has stated emphatically, is our own bureaucratic government. Gen. Dwight D. Eisenhower has pointed out that once a bureaucratic government gets out of hand, there is but a single remedy—dictatorship. And then there isn't much difference between Communism and Capitalism. In our national, state, & local government we are piling up an ever-increasing debt structure. Approximately half your income is now drained away through that sewer. Thoughtful historians and economists alike know that every revolution in successive civilizations down the dark road of history, has grown out of just such an overload of financial and moral poverty. Are we blind enough to let it happen again?

The fundamental issue of our times is how much longer we are going to permit national, state and local government to do business on a blank check. So long as those in powerful positions are allowed to spend and then, we have to pay up, there can be no prosperity, no real "high standards of living", no real security or communal happiness. As economists seldom point out, after every economic upheaval, be it a war or revolution, standards of living are certain to drop. But an invisible siphon that just as surely lowers the level of your security, your standards-of-living, are the ceaseless ability of the politicians to spend without any thought as to where the money is coming from. With the most patriotic motives in the world, such a system cannot be expected to work smoothly.

Government must be put on a fixed budget, pay-as-you-go basis. Government must be simplified and streamlined. One answer lies in the spread of the city manager plan, with a practical, efficient steward in charge, and directly responsible to the people.

THE FREEDOM TO THINK

Much is being said about "Academic Freedom of Thought". As usual, where people who are not accustomed to think logically, but feel strongly with their emotions, get into this game, there is much muddled thinking. Point is not whether Communists, who do not allow themselves freedom of thought, should get a chance insincerely to hide behind our great ideals. No, rather it is whether we, through weak-kneed fear, should reduce the nobility of those ideals, to silence a few traitorous mal-contents.

A great justice of our own Supreme Court, Justice William O. Douglas, has said, "Once we strike down the expression of ideas that we despise, we have forged an instrument for the suppression of ideas that we cherish... For history has shown that once persecution is loosed on one minority, it spreads like a blight."

The preservation of liberty and equal justice can only be continued, if we know what ideas we despise and which we cherish. If we insulate ourselves too carefully from "Communism", we run the risk of not recognizing it when we see it. The value of a college or university training is that it enables youth to get the feel of life and ideas different from its own. In the past America has grown strong by assimilating the best from all of the cultures brought to us by emigrants from other parts of the world. We will certainly learn to appreciate our own ideals best by a responsible free discussion, which shows us just how inferior Communism is. Moreover, we can discern the fellow travellers among us by forcing them to take a post-graduate course of study behind the iron curtain. Real freedom to think is vital to writers, all the non-conformists in every walk of life, who have made America truly great and free.

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FUNDAMENTALS OF GOOD POETRY

By Elva Ray Harris

THE TWO R'S ARE RELATED

Rhyme has a lot to do with rhythm. It is not a thing apart. Its influence on rhythm, therefore, cannot be ignored. Have you ever noticed how much more rhythmical rhymed verse seems than blank verse? It is because rhyme points up rhythm. Wherever a rhyme sound falls, there the accent is sharpened, the emphasis is heightened, because one has a tendency in reading to come down harder on a second rhyme, remembering the previous like sound. It is for this reason that rhyme can be advantageously used to round out and to give a final touch to a line, a stanza, or a poem.

If you space rhyme evenly, it will usually bring out the regularity of the metrical pattern. Take the couplet, for instance. The rhyme sounds divide the repetitions of a basic foot into the neat units of one line. If the rhyme falls only at the end of every other line, the ear hears the poem as if it were written in couplets of longer lines. An internal rhyme shortens the line and knits its parts closely together.

If rhyme occurs at irregular intervals, it makes the lines seem uneven to the ear, however they may be written. For it is only by a natural pause or by rhyme that one can tell the line endings without seeing the poem on the page. So, if a poet realizes the close, interesting relationship between rhymes and rhythm, he can make rhyme work for him, and do unusual things with his meter.

Imagine for a moment a poem written in alternating four and three stress lines. This pattern is very likely to get monotonous or sing-songy, if carried on for too many lines without a break. But suppose we write merely two stanzas of ballad meter, rhyming, say the second and fourth lines. Furthermore, in the third stanza let us add a foot to the second and fourth lines, and introduce a couplet rhyming. By placing the final rhyme on an extra foot in each case, we can bring sharply to the reader's attention the alteration in rhythm. Then in the fourth stanza let us return to the original 4, 3, 4, 3 pattern. It will tie up the beginning and end, and will unify the whole poem.

Here, for the sake of example, are lines, that I myself wrote. The idea is built, you will observe, around one of those "novelty" barometers with which children love to forecast the weather.

PLEA TO THE STORM KING

Pity the old weather witch
Standing in her door,
What a drafty place it is,
Perpetually ajar.

Pity the small boy and girl
In the house all day.
How they'd love the fresh clean snow
If they were out to play.

The children and the witch and we,
All of us, I'm sure, agree
That it's a better plan by far
To leave the children's door ajar.

So, Storm King, it does seem to me
Your hard old heart should soften,
And since you're a minority,
That you should rule less often.

Rhyme can be placed wherever it will serve rhythm. It does not need always to be at the ends of lines. Some of our poetic ancestors used to start with it, and no doubt the extra emphasis it brought to the beginning of a line was good. I have read some examples, and very effective, too, of an end rhyme being paired off with an internal rhyme further along in the poem. You can see what that would do to the rhythm.

Some poets have made a habit of shortening or lengthening a rhyme line, getting much the same result as the internal rhyming which I have just mentioned.

Let us experiment with a four-line stanza and see what happens to the rhythm when its close cousin rhyme starts stepping around.

First of all, here it is in four conventional four stress lines.

THE LAUNDRESS

Deal kindly with her if she stands
A moment overlong beside
Her line of clothes so gaily hung.
She has a right to honest pride!

Now let us push our rhyme ahead one foot.

Deal kindly with her if she stands
A moment overlong beside
Her line of clothes so gaily hung.
She has a right to pride!

Suppose we drop two feet and move the final rhyme still closer to its mate.

Deal kindly with her if she stands
A moment overlong beside
Her line so gaily hung. She has
A right to pride.

Finally, we can put the second rhyme into the first foot of the last line and see what that does to our staid old conventional rhythm of the first quatrain.

Deal kindly with her if she stands
A moment overlong beside
Her flapping line. She has a right
To pride.

Well, I don't know. Maybe rhyme and rhythm

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are sisters instead of cousins!

SOME BOOKS FOR POETS

THE CRYSTAL FOUNTAIN. Grace Noll Crowell... Harper & Brothers. \$1. An eighteenth volume of poems by this prolific writer of songs of encouragement, cheer and faith. Not a word of despair in the book. If you are "down in the dumps", do invest in it. It's a good one to study, too, for its imagery, and lyrical quality.

THE POETRY OF THE NEGRO. Edited by Langston Hughes and Arna Bontemps. Doubleday & Co... \$5. A definitive anthology covering the period from 1746 to 1949. It includes 147 poets, both negro and white, also the work of Caribbean poets. Many of the poems point up the problems of the negro, while others are just good reading.

These books and any others may be purchased through the WRITERS' BOOK CLUB. The book dividends save you money.

WHAT EFFECT WILL TELEVISION HAVE?

A lot of foolish speculation as to competition from television is being voiced by a number of writers, editors, publishers, radio and movie magnates. We at REWRITE are of the opinion all of us would do better to put our energy into making our particular media better entertainment. We prosper as we succeed in giving a better show, not as we are nervous worriers about whether our competitors are offering a better show.

As far as writers are concerned, let's remember that even if television should knock out books, radio, movies, they are still going to need writers, and—stories. But isn't it true that the movies have borrowed a lot of their stories from other media? They've used books and magazines as try-outs to get a preliminary check on how popular the story is likely to prove with the millions and more millions of people, who alone can make a high-cost movie profitable. Television will never be a cheap medium.

Another angle that the magnates overlook, I think, is that radio broadcasting of outstanding baseball and football or other interesting events, has not lessened the public attendance. On the contrary, such radio coverage has created a larger audience, with the result that attendance has actually increased. Remember how books distributed all over the world to the armed forces increased the sale of books by creating more readers?

The point is that all of us need to unite in selling reading as a first class form of entertainment, and a necessity in this educated scientific age. If children find this habit enjoyable, they will continue at it, if decent, worthwhile reading is offered them. POCKET BOOKS through its teen-age book line,

COMET BOOKS, interested the citizens of Morristown, N. J., and adjacent towns in a community-wide crusade for worthwhile children's books. Everyone got out and sold the idea—as an antidote to juvenile delinquency. The results were so successful the plan is being transplanted elsewhere. It should be. But a concerted drive should be made through each and every segment of the publishing industry to point out the fact that the best interest of everyone concerned is for more and better clean, romantic stories. Occasional best-sellers may be sparked by sex and the sordid, but the solid, successful authors, who come back year after year with big selling yarns, are clean writers.

Recently, we have received many complaints regarding the quality or wholesomeness of a considerable number of magazines and books. Our own sampling of certain titles and magazines has not been altogether fortunate or happy. The deterioration of the fiction used in such big circulation magazines as THIS WEEK and COSMOPOLITAN has been marked. But they only accentuate the trend. Other books could be cited with equal dismerit, just as COLLIER'S and the SAT. EVE. POST occasionally have been using what would have been considered "literary" stories a few years ago.

Matters would be greatly helped if literary editors for the larger newspapers, magazines, etc., would live up to their grandiose and over-written title. Few of them, in the opinion of large numbers of readers, are the hatchet-men they should be. Instead, it is a constant parade of the "most wonderful and scintillating book of the year". Three years from now it is difficult to recall even the titles of many of these masterpieces. The cynical can well believe that advertising does control the quality of the enthusiasm. Certainly many of us who know it does not, find it increasingly difficult to show any strong arguments in defense of the "reviewers". Finally, too many big name authors are willing to sell their souls in the manner of certain celebrities, who will endorse anything, if there is publicity or a "buck" in it for them. Authors should early form a commendable habit of never allowing publishers to induce them to praise other writers' books for advertising purposes. (One of the most outrageous frauds is the one or two word quote of insincere adjectives torn from the original context. Druggists are required to sell only on prescription, or clearly mark, dangerous poisons. But publishers will sell "poisonous", pernicious sex fiction to juveniles and adults alike, if they have the dough. If television does steal the reading public, we will have only ourselves to blame.

A FEW MARKET TIPS

"OUR DUMB ANIMALS" is reported overstocked with verse. Ditto: POETS' HAVEN NEWS-JOURNAL as regards quatrains.

THIS DAY, new publication of the Concordia Publishing House, to begin in September.

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EXCLUSIVE

A FURTHER REPORT ON "TRAVEL USA"

A friendly letter from James L. Bossemeyer, chief, U. S. Travel Division, National Park Service, Dep't. of the Interior, Washington 25, D. C., regarding our report on a new travel magazine (February issue). Here is what he says:

"Possibly we can be useful to travel writers by helping them on their travel stories leg work, or at least in telling them how to secure information. But please don't permit them to besiege us with routine inquiries—the answers to which may be found in any library or tour book. We have a total personnel of just eight (8) to serve the whole of the travel industry, third largest in the U. S. So, we can't spare the time to do all of the research on travel questions that can be readily answered elsewhere.

"If any of your readers wish to be included on the mailing list for TRAVEL USA, have them specify that they are travel writers. A limited press run makes it necessary to limit the list to the travel industry, and its allied fields including writers, libraries, educational institutions."

A large bundle of useful literature, card for registering preferences in what one desires to receive on the mailing list, etc., accompanied Mr. Bossemeyer's letter.

THERE IS NO END TO "VANITY"

Alvin Levin, of the William-Frederick Press who will start arguing the "vanity" publishing issue at the drop of a hat, suggests it would be a good idea for "all publishers to include in every book or booklet the standard statement, 'this book has been published at the author's expense', if such is the case".

Well, there is one very good way to start the precedent! Seriously, we think it is an excellent and logical extension of our previous statement (February issue) that vanity publication is unfair to the reader, because he may not have the capacity to grade it for himself as the inferior stuff it usually is when a printer merely lends his machines for a fee. This does not mean that a royalty publisher or an author printing privately, may not issue trips. But it does signify that they have staked their reputation and money in the belief they think it's well worth publishing. The vanity printer on the other hand simply shuts his eyes, holds his nose and says, "The reading public be damned." His only interest is whether his authors have the dough to pay his swollen fees.

AND THEIR VOICES SHALL BE HEARD, Paul E. Pross, Box 322, Atlantic, Iowa, the little, experimental magazine, is devoting considerable amount of space to exposing "critics" and vanity publishers, who prey on writers. A very commendable service. We welcome it.

(MORE) HOW'S YOUR BATTING AVERAGE?

Robert J. Richardson

Poems: Portland OREGONIAN, Poets' Haven NEWS-JOURNAL.

Whit Sawyer

Article: C. S. MONITOR Magazine Section.

Ruby Pease

Stories: Concordia Publishing Co.
Articles: Lewiston JOURNAL, Essex Institute, Portsmouth HERALD

Send in your hits and misses, Minute men!

WHAT SHALL WE READ?

A writer, whose time is limited, asks the inevitable question: "What shall I read?" A writer grows according to what he feeds upon. It is doubtful if many great authors in the future will spring from a steady diet of the comics section of our Sunday papers. I read them in my youth, but soon switched to the books that were plentiful in our house. I wish now that I had done more reading and that my schooling had not spoiled my hunger for the classics by making so many of these seem very dull.

What we read in later life depends greatly upon our special interests. But we ought to glance at a daily paper, or a good week-end summary of the news. (The C.S. MONITOR has a lot of good features that will fill any author's mental storehouse with valuable fact material. A writer should skim the magazine cross-section. He can follow certain books, and his friends will often call his attention to special articles of interest. A public library and the readers' guide services will enable him to widen his survey. We at REWRITE find that a publication of your own is valuable just for the books, magazines & pamphlets we receive on exchange.

Any writer is wise who early develops the ability to read by headlines and leads. The pieces that are for him or contain some bit he may wish to use, he clips and files, often unread. Later, he can read these at his leisure, along with the others that he gets on the same subject. Such reading of a number of clips is more profitable than skimming each separately. One of the most important things a good reader learns, is to get his fingers on what he wants quickly.

It does not matter very much what a reader reads, so long as he does some good reading regularly. This is very difficult to do these days. But 15 minutes a day, or once a week can do an awful lot to fill your mind. A night or two ago, I stumbled across a chapter of Henry Beston's "The Outermost House". I'd read the book several times, but I read the chapter to Elva. We both felt refreshed.

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THERE IS ART IN A GOOD OPENING

How smart are you at beginning a story? I read a story the other day that technically appeared to be all right. But it lacked one of the basic ingredients, human interest, a sense of color, warmth and strong emotional drive. I didn't care two cents whether I read it or not. And that is of course fatal. If you can't excite the reader to the pitch of enthusiasm, which makes him exclaim: "Golly, I've simply got to finish this one," you've failed in your mission. You won't pull down a check.

That story set me thinking. It made me recall a remark of Arthur Sullivan Hoffman. A writer can't afford to be able to do just a single thing well. The good story-teller, he said, can do a number of tricks well at the same time. That is very true of the beginning of a story. And so that is why the opening is so difficult; why professionals tell us they spend most of their time on a start and when they have that right, the rest almost writes itself. That, naturally, simplifies the problem of telling a story; nevertheless, there is some truth to it. So, let us see for ourselves some of the good characteristics that ought to be built into the effective beginning.

First, there should be a striking MC. One of my students kidded me recently because I insisted that she make her MCs more appealing. Actually, I don't insist on that. There has been a trend lately, chiefly due to the preoccupation of the movies and radio with a type of gangster mug or moll MC. The cynical, brutal tone that passes for "realism", is all right, if that's what your editor is looking for. But it serves best only in the "perfect crime" type of short story. Readers have a strange predilection of desiring to identify themselves with the MC. And so, some readers have a not unnatural dislike of imagining that they are horrible or despicable characters. But whether your MC is appealing or not, he should at least be striking and out of the ordinary. The reader has a right to expect something unusual, out of the ordinary. That's the first job.

Next, you have to give the MC a background against which he lives. Too many stories in me. are formless and vague with respect to a locale. Some of them do not even mention it! This is a by-product of the failure of many inexperienced writers to write in definite, clean-cut scenes. The warm appreciative appeal of a particular place, sometimes viewed nostalgically, can exert almost as strong an effect on readers as a viable MC. It is worth striving for.

Another important characteristic of a good opening is an intriguing problem. A great, great many writers tell us they do not like to write about problems. Probably because a problem hits them every other minute in real life. But, I can assure you, nothing makes a

reader yawn so quickly as a story that pictures only "pleasant" things and hasn't any dramatic crises. The basic root of an effective narrative hook is a strange, puzzling, provocative problem. The old gag about some poor devil holding on to a cliff with nothing but his fingernails, is a true one. The reader is going to stop, look and watch until he satisfies his curiosity and lust for excitement.

But a problem alone is not enough. A great scientist or mathematician could pose problems that would be marvels of ingenuity, but they would not make the average lay reader, I am afraid, look twice. There must be conflict. Two characters struggling. Notice I said "struggling", not just fighting or using a hatchet on each other. There must always be some significance for the reader in the fight. Just a couple of surly pugs isn't a subject of interest for long. That is why the well thought out problem story is often eagerly sought after by editors. Take a subject such as socialized medicine. If all of the characters symbolize different points of view and defend or attack the idea of medical security administered by the State, you will have an exciting intellectual problem.

But even this kind of a problem that fits the experience of the reader and with which he can identify himself, may not be enough. There are two further characteristics which an author should give to his opening. Readers like to feel strongly about a story. If the MC does not show a strong drive, or desire to achieve the goal the author sets out for him, how can the reader feel that way? I read a lot of mss. in which the MC faces his problem apathetically. It is stated clearly but there is no motivated drive, and therefore the reader is not excited intellectually, nor stirred with curiosity.

The second characteristic is emotion. If the MC's motivation is not backed up with a strongly projected emotion, no amount of intellectual curiosity and suspense alone will hook the reader. That is why it is very important to use warm emotional words. You've got to sell the reader through his emotional reactions. If you don't stir your reader you will never get him to read the remainder of the story. It does no good for you to feel the story, if you don't make the reader feel it, too.

From all of these separate elements which I have discussed, you can readily see a beginning to a story is a very complex thing. So is the writing of fiction for commercial magazines, yet many writers rush in and try to sell to them on practically an "ad libbing" basis. How can they expect to be seriously considered when they themselves don't take their job seriously? To write a really good opening is to make a minor masterpiece, whatever the intrinsic value of the story or its eventual importance. Because even mediocre stories contain good technical tricks.

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SUSPENSE WILL HOLD THE READER

Suspense is one element that most writers fail to get enough of in their stories. Yet it more than any other single factor snarls and holds a reader. Nor is it limited merely to fiction. A couple of our neighbors in a sidewalk discussion the other day, told us how they had been reading Commander Ellsberg's book about rescue work on the various U. S. Navy submarines that sank off Provincetown, Portsmouth, N. H., etc., a few years ago. It was a pleasure to see their eyes light up, a tone of excitement creep into their voices. "That's a book you can't lay down," one declared.

It's a truism that if you can make anything you write so interesting intellectually, or emotionally that a reader cannot lay it down, you have accomplished something. But a mere intellectual or emotional interest alone is not enough. There must be the positive pull of an itching, nagging suspense, which won't let the reader alone until he has satisfied it. He simply must know how the story ends. This is not entirely a matter of materials, the characters you choose and the life they lead. Many inexperienced writers think that if they get the right plot, the story tells itself. That is not true. One of the reasons why some authors are paid large sums is because they have a skill in arranging scenes that are dramatic and carry a high degree of suspense. They place the scenes in an order that makes for suspense.

Let me give you an example. Suppose a man is seen holding a gun on another man. After a violent argument, which reveals nothing about the difference existing between them or reasons for the quarrel, the man with the gun shoots the other. That is exciting drama, I grant you, but it won't hold many readers. But let us rearrange things a bit. Give the reader a scene showing a returning soldier, for instance, going home. He shows his buddies that he is desperately in love, and is looking forward to a good job that is going to give him a wonderful professional opportunity to do a project that will benefit all humanity. But in the next scene we see that the girl is in love with the other man. The scene discloses that the second man is content to sneak out of the draft and not play his part in defending his country. The soldier fights desperately to win back his girl. But he discovers the second man has not only let the country down, but has played the slick double-crosser on him and the girl he loves. The scene of the shooting comes next and there is considerable suspense, because we know that if the soldier shoots the man, thereby committing murder, he will lose both his golden opportunity, and also the girl.

But we can yank the situation up tighter. Suppose we give the soldier a real girl who remains true to him. Suppose we imagine him to be not a common soldier, but an important official in post-war Germany or Japan. Let's

kick the story around until in some way the first girl and man (the ones we had in that previous plot) are smooth lures or spies. It is all a fantastic plot to make the official commit a murder and thus destroy himself. His usefulness to himself and his government will be thrown away, if he is enticed so as to make a fool of himself. The reader knows all this. So, now the unrolling of the final scene becomes intolerable to the reader. He sits on the edge of his chair, feels like screaming to warn the hero of his danger. A melodramatic, corny plot? Sure, but it will give you the general ideas.

That makes me think of something. Lots of writers handle their stories too gingerly. A plot must sell or it is no good. Not enough writers plot for the sake of loosening up a few mental muscles. Yes, I know all about a need for money-come-soon, and a dislike for wasting time. But until you get down to the earthy job of fiddling with ideas and characters, you really don't know what plotting is. It is easy enough to start a plot, then see that it is no good and throw up a hand. Have you really explored the whole of a plot and found the "meat" under the not-so-good, apparently worthless exterior? Have you ever taken a series of scenes and played with them, seeing what happens when you reverse, alter, or change the viewpoint and emphasis? That's the way professionals dream up their stories that sell.

Suspense occurs because one of two situations arises. Either you put your hero into such a predicament that (1) the reader's in a dither to see something happen; or he's in a different kind of dither because he is afraid that the wrong thing will happen. It always works, whichever way you play it. Do you remember how your heart has ached, fearing that Joe Dubbes won't get the girl? And do you recall those old fashioned melodramatic tales where your heart almost stopped, because you were afraid the train wouldn't be really flagged in time while hero Bingo was still tied to the track? One fear is "positive", the other "negative" so far as advancing the plot. But both are good for a heart-throb, if made to look sincere enough.

"Made to look sincere enough." That's the key to the whole thing. We might as well admit that what we do with words is artificial and make-believe. But if we do it well, ably enough, it stirs a reader and can even have a profound effect on real life. Who can say that the imaginary stories we all have read as children, have not shaped our ideals and outlook on life? And does not this cause us to do things, which in turn shapes life for ourselves and others? What it amounts to is that we "tease" readers by making them feel something intensely that looks real, but is not. It is a trick done with mirrors. Readers, however, wish, nay, ardently desire to be thus teased. And we have a wholesome effect on their lives by doing this. Suspense is the strongest possible way of doing it.

REWRITE

LET YOUR READER INTO THE SECRET

Elva went to the movies the other day for pleasure. But it proved to be a busman's day off, because she could not get the show off her mind for a week. "As I reviewed each of the scenes," she commented, "I found that a principle was beginning to formulate itself. I noticed that they each embodied a principle. Bill and I have discussed frequently. It seems to be a hard one for inexperienced or beginning writers to understand. At least I seldom see them apply it in the mss. I read here and at the various conferences."

The principle Elva referred to is that of letting the audience know more than the MC. So many persons who are just beginning fiction writing, make the mistake of withholding information, in the belief that because it is withheld, the curiosity will be aroused. The exact opposite is true. Far from an exciting story rising to a twist climax, you give the reader only a chance to fumble for the minimum meaning of the story, let alone complex overtones. There is such a thing of course as a mystery story. But in these the author has first told the reader what it is all about. As Elva has so wisely remarked in discussing this problem: "You must be careful, extremely careful; what you withhold is often the key to the success or failure you achieve with a story. It is so much more fun to be on the inside of a secret, watching it pop, than to be asked merely to come along, and have faith that something will happen."

In Somerset Maugham's "The Moon and Sixpence", one of his earlier and great tales, he utilizes this principle very elaborately. The "I" character who tells the story, first discusses the characters in the light of his knowledge of them after the story is all over. While he is doing this, he lets fall an important fact: namely, that the hero ran away from his wife, because she was a "good" woman and he got hideously tired of her. As the story gets under way, we follow the "I" character, now a rather callow young man of only 23, as he watches this event happen. He and the good wife cannot imagine why the MC does such a blackguardly deed. But the reader knows why. He also knows that the MC has become a famous artist. Maugham teases us. A careful and deliberate release of the right information in a clever, cynical and brutal manner, makes us wish to know more about an amazing story, a great character, which very carefully he does not release. Every writer should study this skillful technical device. One may dislike Maugham's cynical, sardonic insincerity, but we cannot help admiring an extraordinary skill in starting a story.

Maugham is very skilful also in utilizing this device to set up his memorable scenes. Again and again he lets the reader into the secret and as a result when the characters, in scene after scene come together there is conflict or tension of some kind. When, for instance, the wife sends the "I" character,

strangely enough, to Paris as her emissary, to try to win the husband back. We observe the good wife running true to character. She is apparently upset by her loss, but it's because of injured pride rather than a broken heart. Maugham lets the reader see it first and then watch the "I" character thinking about it as he relives the scene. This discovery in turn prepares for and colors the following scene with the husband. It explains why the husband has left his wife. But the story-teller, still not sure of his ground, is a dutiful defender of the wife. The result: the reader enjoys the husband's thorough and not at all surprising contempt for the "I's" stupidity. We could not possibly accept the boorish and uncavalier humor of the husband if Maugham had not carefully explained what the true situation was and is.

It is easier for the movies to use such a device than it is for the author who writes words on a page. This is because the movies can show us action taking place in two different places, and yet keep these scenes in the single, unified flow of a central "line of interest". It does not violate viewpoint as it would on the printed page. Do you recall how Eugene O'Neill accomplished this in "Desire Under the Elms"? He played 2 scenes simultaneously by removing the side of that New England farmhouse where the action took place. Thus, we could see two scenes in two rooms at once. The father and his second wife going to bed in one room; the son, itching, writhing with desire for his stepmother, on the other side of the wall. There was a very fine, if morbidly sordid, example of how the principle could be worked in two directions at once. Because the boy could not see what cold blooded mercenary motives prompted the stepmother. Nor could she realize how deeply the son was tormented, fact that would in the end complicate greatly her own motives.

This principle not only heightens ordinary suspense, it also is the secret of the success of those "double-meaning" scenes. For instance, in Uzzell's "Narrative Technique" he uses the very weak example of a Catholic priest who confides at a public meeting the fact that the first man in his confessional was a murderer. Then the mayor appears, and states that he was the first man ever to enter the good father's confession booth. The reader immediately connects the two bits of dialogue.

Last summer Elva and I read a hair-raising short short with a twist. A man committed a terrifying murder, drove calmly away thirty miles, only to discover that he'd messed up his carefully laid plan of two sets of winter gloves. He'd left one of the wrong ones on the scene, where it would tell-tale identify him in the morning. But the reason the twist was so powerful was that the reader was told about those two sets of gloves and how they would carry the murder through unscathed. The unexpected detail that happens always, however, distracted the reader & MC.

REWRITE

A HINT TO THE WISE

Somewhere I read recently that psychologists say on an average you can break a habit and form a new one in about 6 weeks. The thought is probably over-simplified. But it is a straw in the wind you can perhaps use.

BOOKS FOR WRITERS

LANGUAGE SKILLS. Dorothy J. Colburn. Harcourt, Brace & Co. An advanced book for high school students interested in serious writing. The three parts cover the craft of writing (many types, such as the report, theme, reference paper and short story, etc.); revision, and the effective management of sentences. It is a detailed and helpful book that all workers with words will benefit from reading. (Price not given.)

THE WRITTEN WORD. Gorham Munson. Creative Age Press. \$2.95. This book represents Munson's accumulated notes from teaching a workshop, held annually for many years at the celebrated New School for Social Research, New York. Mr. Munson's approach is informal, literary. But he backs his theories up with arresting and lively anecdotes that make them helpful to writers. His emphasis on the necessity of satisfying readers is altogether sensible. A WRITERS' BOOK CLUB Selection.

Note: these books and any others may be obtained through the WRITERS' BOOK CLUB. They will earn you a Book Dividend. You save and build a library at the same time.

The WCS Circulating Library can loan most writers' books to you (\$2 per year—\$1 used to stock popular titles—plus postage). You can thus sample the books that interest you before you buy them.

Rodale Press. Announcement was made as we went to press that this firm's "Glossaries" (reviewed in our February issue, will be reduced in price from \$1 to 75c, effective on March 1. David M. Glixon, promotion manager, says this will bring the total cost down to around \$80. (Still pretty steep. Ed.) They hope eventually to reduce them to 50c, when "they have found wider acceptance".

Glixon also informs us that they expect to publish "Short Story Writing", by the editor of the new magazine, THE SOUTHERNER. He's F. Orlin Tremaine. The editor's viewpoint is stressed, it is said.

ELVA AND BILL LIKE TO TALK TO GROUPS

Elva has been working up some talks about writing. (We don't very often "lecture"; we like to meet audiences informally, and talk along the lines that will help the individual members the most. You can't do that, if you "lecture".) Elva's talks are both "technical" and just for fun—about the human side of some of the distinguished authors she has met. Write in, if you're interested.

Helpful Hint

GOOD ADVICE FROM A HOUSEWIFE

Here is a writing tip for procrastinators. My one New Year's resolution was: One NEW article or story sent out each week of the year, and one revision or rejection to work on. It keeps the old brain expending with new material, even if only a poem or juvenile piece. Yet it does not tie one down to a definite, burdensome schedule, if such is not practical for a housewife who has to sandwich mss. and housework in between rest periods, or at least sitting down times.

Ina Blanchard Bates

A good "Minute Man" Mrs. Bates sends us a note from the David C. Cook Publishing Co., which reads: "Sorry, 'What to Do' is not in the market for material of any kind any longer."

INTERIM WORD FROM THE CHRISTOPHERS

A preliminary announcement from the Christophers states that 2431 mss. were received in the two contests for prize-winning plays and novels. One woman sent 5 plays and four novels, another submitted 7 novels! A wise thought by Fr. James Keller, director, sums up the purpose behind these awards. "There is value," he says, "in refusing to buy offensive literature, in turning off the vulgar radio programs, and in abstaining from indecent movies, but the cure does not lie in that direction alone. More must be done. The writer with spiritual values can do something that few others are doing consistently today: without sermonizing he can show the basic moral values that govern and protect life. The Christophers wish to be of service in such a cause, which has such far-reaching possibilities. We aim to encourage, by every means, worthwhile writers, no matter who, or what, they are."

NEW DATE FOR "WRITERS ON WRITING"

"WRITERS ON WRITING", the UNH Conference's handbook, with chapters by Esther Forbes and a number of other big name authors, and also two chapters by William E. Harris, has been re-scheduled for early in May. Presumably, Doubleday & Co. does not wish it to conflict with Kenneth Roberts' "I Wanted to Write" & also "Writing", the book that shows SAT EYE. POST stories and articles from idea to finished and published pieces. Both are excellent books, and both by Doubleday.

Marjorie Piers told Herschel Brickell the final appearance of this book was going to be "beautiful", when the volumes start flowing from the press.

We have a very respectable advance order-list for "WRITERS ON WRITING". It is building up rapidly. We hope we can have at least a few copies available in time for the Boston Reunion.

REWRITE

HOW'S YOUR BATTING AVERAGE?

In this column all the members of the WCS Family may indulge in friendly competition. The "Family" includes all who read REWRITE, or patronize any of our many services. You can check what some editors are buying. You get ideas for sales of your own.

We award quarterly prizes for the fattest average, and for the writer who makes a lot out of what he's got, and generally displays the most character worthy of our great profession. We also reward the best Minute Man each quarter. We have found that one of the best and most helpful features we print has been the frank, down-to-earth comments from all types of writers regarding their experiences with editors. It shows other writers what they can expect, and who are the editors to spend time on sending mss. to. Over a period of time there is no better way for writers to accumulate a perspective on markets and writing and selling techniques.

Marjorie M. Davidson

Articles: 'TEENS, UPWARD, VISION, LIGHT AND LIFE EVANGEL.

*Short Story: The SENTINEL (First story)

Gilean Douglas

In a semi-annual report he reports thus: 36 articles, 56 poems and 2 short stories.

Mary Grant Charles

Poems: AMERICAN WEAVE, OREGONIAN, N. H. TROUBADOUR, NATIONAL NEWS (A. Legion Auxiliary), Boston HERALD, YANKEE.

Doris Marston

Articles: FARM JOURNAL, COLLECTOR-HOBBYIST, Boston GLOBE, Boston POST.

Hazel May Wynn

Article: The INSTRUCTOR.

Marjorie McClellan Flint

Short Short Story: The Boston POST.

William E. Gebhardt

Short Story: LITERARY FLORIDA

William S. McKee

Editorial: The VICTORIAN

Helen Swift

Articles: PARENTS', BETTER HOMES & GARDENS.

Florence M. Davis

Story: The INSTRUCTOR.

A GOOD MARKET FOR SHORT FEATURES

SWING, Mori Greiner, WHB Broadcasting Co., Searfitt Bldg., Kansas City 6, Mo. In a nice letter from Betsey Sheidley, assistant editor, we received a copy of the friendly form list of market requirements sent by this editorial office to all writers with whom contact is made. No poetry. But an active market for "bright, timely, informative non-fiction (800-1,800 words). Third person narration preferred. A small amount of fiction & the length is the same (800-1,800 words).

SWING also uses filler (100-700 words).. Humorous or factual. Pays on Acc. \$10 - \$15 for features, 1¢ per word for shorts.

An unusual feature is that the editor has a card form for pieces he wishes to examine closely. It lists the title and the approximate date when a final report will be given. Thus, an author knows where he stands. A lot of compliments have been received, Betsey Sheidley says, regarding this service! I wonder why. Other editors take note!

Incidentally, REWRITE is being filed regularly in the SWING office, "for use of our staff," says Miss Sheidley. One of the most helpful magazines for writers they've found. (Bless their hearts! Ed.)

THE TOUCH OF ACID ETCHES CHARACTER

In her "Turns With a Bookworm" column (NY HERALD TRIBUNE, January 23), IMP (Isabel M. Patterson) cuts down to size some of Douglas Southall Freeman's statements about America's first president in his "George Washington". Thus, she comments: "Now we would say Washington was mentally long-sighted to an extraordinary degree...His views & his motives of action took in continents and centuries.... where most men think by the day or year."

She also adds the rhetorical question and answer: "Does patriotism actually consist of putting up with whatever a government chooses to inflict on its citizens?...if it does G. Washington didn't know it to the end of his days."

Both are good comments, when applied to a writer.

PUT THE COST WHERE IT BELONGS

The movie short, TIME MARCHES ON, dealing with the U. S. Post Office Department, quoted Postmaster-General Jesse Donaldson while seated in person at his official desk. The Postmaster said that most of the postal deficit is incurred through handling postcards used by business for advertising and selling purposes. He said it costs the Department about 2¢ to handle this mail; he said business could not duplicate it for less than 4¢. Then why not limit the postcard to personal use? And why drive the small magazines into bankruptcy by charging them for it?

REWRITE

\$3,000 FOR A JUVENILE BOOK

The Charles W. Follett Award, 1255 So. Wabash Ave., Chicago 5, Ill. This new prize is being offered by Wilcox & Follett, publishers. It will be a set annual award of \$1,000 on announcement of the winner, \$2,000 as an advance on royalties on the date of publication. Mss. must not have been previously in print. Entry forms required. Closes: September 1, 1949, and annually thereafter.

THE WCS CIRCULATING LIBRARY, ETC.

We are grateful to Dr. Edythe A. Bacon for a copy of "Silent It and Sell It" by Bess Samuel Ayres, a book on the selling of poetry, which she has contributed to the WCS Circulating Library. (We operate this as a practical service for writers. We have most all of the better books for writers available & several hundred general books. The cost: only \$2 per year, plus postage both ways. \$1 of this is spent entirely to buy duplicates of the more popular titles.

The Complete File of REWRITE. Most of the file is still in stock. About 12 copies are out of print. Subscribers may have it for a bargain price of \$3, plus postage, which is not excessive. Others may have it for \$5 and the postage.

Special Subscription Rates on REWRITE. We are probably one of the few magazines, that has a strictly honest subscription rate. We have never offered advance subscriptions at trial or bargain rates. We try to offer the best possible writers' magazine at the lowest possible cost. We think it is extremely annoying to pay the full price and then find that others subscribe year in and year out on a 7 months for the price of six basis. So, REWRITE costs only \$2 anywhere in the world—including Moscow, if writers are permitted to read it there.

But writers' clubs, libraries, schools or writers, who would like duplicate copies for filing purposes, may always subscribe at the special price of \$1.50. And we are very glad to quote special rates on back issues. Or if you wish to support REWRITE by subscribing, say in blocks of 5 or more subscriptions at a single time, we'll give you a special low rate. REWRITE is not published to make money, but rather to serve as many writers and to help them sell. So, let us get going! The more you and your Gang support us, more we'll be able to do for you!

SOME MARKET TIPS FOR WRITERS

FURIOSO, John Pauker, Carleton College, ... Northfield, Minn., a literary magazine, has this new address and has upped its rates to writers, according to the PUBLISHERS' WEEKLY. Certainly good news.

The Venture Press, Summer Long, 1919 Washington St., Holliston, Mass., is a new juvenile publishing firm, which has issued one, and scheduled three more books. Philip Dearth and Nona Long Smyth are also members of the firm.

NOTES ABOUT TWO AGENTS

Merion Saunders, New York agent, visited us recently prior to a trip to England and the Continent. She is looking for new writers—but they must be selling or be recommended. Most reputable agents work through editors, critics and teachers in developing new clients.

Berthold Fles, another agent, makes periodical trips to Hollywood in search of movie writers, who are experienced, but rather frustrated by grinding out pictures.

Fles' anthology of COLLIER'S short shorts (#1) has sold very well. He is working on a book of longer stories.

THE WCS SCHOLARSHIP FUND

The Fund was enlarged recently by several small gifts. We accept these gratefully and use them where they seem to be most needed. Our aim is always to get as many good deeds done for writers as we can in the few years at our disposal. Human life is fleeting and one must hurry, if he is to get even a very small part of all he would like to do, done.

We are always glad to help any needy folk who may be expected to fight harder, when a friendly hand or cheery word is given to them. The WCS Scholarship Fund is a revolving one in the sense that if any writer is able and willing to repay any of the help given him, he immediately shares with us the pleasures of helping other writers worse off than he.

THE BULLETIN BOARD

The FTC has issued a complaint against National Surveys, Educational Development Co., and the United Acceptance Co., firms that a West Coast bookseller, the FTC claims, misrepresents the facts in selling 59 items in reference books and encyclopaedias.

The FTC has also entered a stipulation and agreement with the Ad-Craft Printers, of Chicago, to cease representing certain materials as being "engraved".

Thanks to former Rep. Jerry Voorhis, we're on the mailing list for "News of Co-ops", a very readable news-sheet of information regarding the co-operatives all over the country. These are the organizations by which a lot of the little people of this nation get good things done through working together.. The new address is: 725 Jackson Place, N.W., Washington 6, D. C.

FAMILY CIRCLE is reported to be returning mss. with the comment, "overstocked". Desert News Pub. Co., Salt Lake City, "local stuff".

REWRITE

THE BULLETIN BOARD

Louise Seaman Bechtel has taken over from May Lambertson Becker the NY HERALD TRIBUNE's weekly "Books for Young People" column. We consider this very good news for writers of juvenile books. The column has had a record of great editing under Miss Becker, who continues her other notable column, "The Reader's Guide". But Mrs. Bechtel's appointment is a guarantee of future high quality editing because she is almost a legend in the publishing field. She first served as the Macmillan Company's juvenile editor. I think you'll find she was thus the first outstanding editor in the children's field. Since then, a profound influence on the publishing of good books has been exerted by her numerous projects and many interests. Now, she has been given a fine opportunity to do even more.

From Louise Thomas of Doubleday & Co., we have received a bathetically appealing dispatch by George Weller, the news correspondent. It concerns the Polynesian family belonging to Robert Dean Frisbie, one of this country's great South Sea writers. He died last November in the Cook Islands, leaving a family of five children, who are being cared for by warmhearted New Zealand neighbors of Rarotongo. Two boys hope to get educated in New Zealand while "Johnny" (born Florence) is trying at it to mother the family and write her second book. The first was "Miss Ulysses From Puka-Puka." She speaks English, French, Samoan and many minor dialects of the Cook Islands.

Redcliffe College, Appointment Bureau, Cambridge 38, Mass., has announced another course in Publishing Procedures, direction by Helen Everitt, NYC editor, Houghton Mifflin Co.

The box in the middle of these two columns offers some good advice to editors, and some excellent ideas for projects to writers. In your attempt to gain popular success, never underestimate the intelligence or the emotional capacity of your audience. The quickest way to make a place for yourself is to figure out an interesting and important literary void that needs to be filled well in a unique manner.

A fund is being raised for the Frisbie Family, all of whom hold American citizenship. Contributions may be sent to Lee Barker, 544 East 86th St., NYC 28, or to James Michener, 85 Charles St., NYC 14. One is an editor, the other a well known author. Frisbie, curiously, once acted with William S. Hart.

NOT ALL GREAT THINKING IS IN BOOKS

A lot of good writing slips through newspapers, like sand through a sieve. It's here today, gone tomorrow, and too often left to crumble into obscurity in the dusty files of some forgotten library basement. Newspapermen don't consider it unusual. They are expected to write well and grind out columns, whether Hell freezes over or not.

To those of us who hate war, this bit IMP (Isabel M. Patterson) wrote in the NY HERALD TRIBUNE, in her column, "Turns With a Bookworm", seems very close to great writing, & a truly very effective stroke in the weary, never-ending fight to make men see the folly of their ways. It is also a thrust writers, I think, should be willing to acknowledge as all too sadly true all too often.

A rather silly comment by Elizabeth Bowen, the English novelist, gave IMP her chance. A strenuous wartime assignment for the Ministry of Information practically forced Miss Bowen, according to her own confession, to get some of her war experiences down on paper.. To which IMP replied:

THE PRESS

WITHOUT THE COMEDIANS: We are not prepared to challenge the conclusion of the radio chains that there are more people who want to hear Jack Benny defending himself against charges of parsimony than would like to hear Toscanini conduct a symphony orchestra on Sunday evenings. That is probably the case: the Hopper poll can hardly be as wrong about radio audiences as it was about the election. The public that dials in Charlie McCarthy or Walter Winchell is undoubtedly radio's largest public. We concede that. But we believe that there is another public, and one by no means negligible in size. It is a public that would prefer Sunday evening programs of another sort. . . we believe that some surprising Hooper-ratings might be recorded if Toscanini, for example, were brought out of the dusky hour where he is now hidden away on Saturday afternoons and given a chance to recruit a Sunday evening following. Such an evening could find someone to do the sort of thing Alexander Woolcott used to do, and possibly do it better. It could provide responsible comment on world events, seen from the week-end perspective, on the order of the old Raymond Swing broadcasts. It could use the Westminster Choir or organizations of similar ability to provide glorious choral music. (There need be no return to the corn of the Seth Parker program.) Great plays are available. Such a man as Dr. Foedick could share the wisdom of his experience, and not by sermonizing. There is great literature, including the Bible, to be read and discussed.—Christian Century (Unden.)

"We can't pretend the experience would have been equally rewarding for us; in fact, having seen two world wars, and no end in sight, the general aspect of wartime appears to us the most hideous bore-om....It is a monstrous stupidity to begin with, and it plumbs in the human race the—utmost vacuity, expressed in parrot phrases, idiot gestures and grinning, empty faces....It reaches the peak of imbecility among what are called educated people, because they've more words to say nothing with.. ordinary folk take it out in simple apathy...No writer has ever, it seems, portrayed the realities of war time in this respect...We fear it is because writers are the most industrious purveyors of the wartime clichés, and either don't hear themselves or don't like to remember it afterward."

Can you express your hate with such quiet, concentrated fury?.. For a longer and more savage, but sound attack, see Porter Sargent, 11 Beacon St., Boston, Mass., who publishes his own books and publicizes those of other outstanding creative thinkers, recognized as exceptional leaders in the fields they have made their own.

WCS SCHOLARSHIP FUND

The WCS FUND is now helping an English writer. It has helped several Canadian writers in the past.

REWRITE

THE OPPORTUNITY LIES WITH YOU

Clifford Odets, the playwright who writes plays with such a vigorous social viewpoint, was interviewed recently by Mark Barron. He made a point that is interesting to everyone who writes.

He said: "The U. S. is so overflowing with people who, if studied diligently, would be the most wonderful material for plays, books, or any sort of literary material. American writers, I think, overlook so much material which is practically sitting in their laps. William Faulkner does more than anyone else I know in utilizing these characters."

Mark Barron commented that Odets in writing such plays as "Awake and Sing", "Golden Boy" and "The Big Knife", does research for the material in his plays as if he were a reporter on a newspaper.

This is not an original remark on the American scene. Henry Arthur Jones, the eminent English playwright, who was one of the earliest to write in what we call the realistic type of drama, said the same thing once, while he was travelling in this country. It is the often expressed envious thought made by many foreign writers. It is, of course, a lot more interesting, coming from an American author, who has made a name for himself in the field of plays having social significance.

CENSORSHIP OF COMICS INCREASES

A drastic campaign against the Comics has been started in Massachusetts. REWRITE had a momentary direct interest in this because our friend and subscriber, James B. Connolly, the great sea story writer, was appointed censor of the Comics by Mayor James McCarley, for the City of Boston. Unfortunately, a city law forbids anyone over 70 years from holding any city post. So Jim, who is now an octogenarian, was forced to retire. He confessed to Bill that he had never read a Comics book. "I read some of Horatio Alger and plenty of the Dime Novels." Jim added acute criticism by saying that the Dime Novels always gave you a good story, whereas Horatio undermined morals by ceaselessly underscoring "Success" through making a million dollars. "They were the Comics of my day," Jim commented, "creating a false world of wish fulfillment and fantasy of an immature type."

We at REWRITE have always said that in our opinion publishers who seek to defend books or Comics that are questionably immoral, by pleading for free speech, are doing a great disservice to real freedom of speech. There certainly can be an honest difference as to what is "immoral" or likely to "encourage" a crime wave. But in Philadelphia recently the publishers and distributors of a writer who has made much of being "persecuted" by booksellers, voluntarily withdrew his books when they were about to be prosecuted for selling

WHICH WAY DO YOU FACE A SITUATION?

Have you ever stopped to think that there are three slants by which everyone looks at the world he lives in? If you pause to consider, you will quickly recall examples you know within your own experience. Persons in whom you see the perfect illustration of one or more of the three types of mental reaction to experience. I want to give you these three patterns because they are important if you are to understand the way your own mental processes work in writing.

Some persons are extremely good in developing a brilliant bit of repartee after the appropriate moment for springing it, is gone forever. This is what you might call "hindsight". It is not very good in life because you need to be quick on the trigger. But it is not too bad in writing. Many of the comedy scenes that have become classics on the radio, in the movies and plays are written, if the truth were known, by quiet, seriously inclined men, who are not particularly amusing when they appear in public. (I know because I interviewed one once and discovered he could not expound the theory of being funny at all well.) But behind their desks, in the safety of their writing-rooms, these men are expert practitioners of the serious business of creating humor. That is because they have an instinctive flare for the slow retort. Knowing what comedy is, even if they can't always put it into words, they build up a situation or a rapier-like line backwards by the slowly ripening process of looking at their bits of life after they have happened.

Another type of person is foresighted. He can appraise or size up a situation literally before it occurs. It would be very foolish to try to argue that this man's mind is geared the same way as that of the previous type. Nor is it merely a question of speed, or quick-thinking. He sees things differently. He looks at life with the long view. He can achieve a perspective on time and vital decisions as they arise, whereas most men & women are lucky if they can make a decision on the basis of what is practical at the immediate moment alone. They are not able often to look ahead and see the later effect.

Writers will find it useful to study themselves in the light of this generalization. Do you size up a situation in advance, take it on the run, or see it best when it's over? If you have been unable to plot, think this matter through and see that perhaps it's because you have not been getting the longest view on your material. You've perhaps faced the MC's problems close up instead of getting the writer's angle of looking back.

obscene books. To fight for "free speech" on such a level is to weaken the defense of the real genuine article. Thus, here in Massachusetts the authorities are beginning to place "obscene" charges and get books suppressed. Without publicity. That's dangerous. Previ-

REWRITE

ously, the Watch & Ward Society or a private citizen swore out a complaint and the regular processes of civilized law followed the due course. The objection was that the book received a lot of free publicity. But now, the state's attorney can go quietly into the court and if he can get one judge to decide the book is obscene, it can be swept off of all the public bookshelves, and it becomes a serious legal crime for any bookseller to offer it for sale. It can still be advertised in the local papers as being sold outside of the State.

This is a serious matter. It upsets whatever literary standards may have entered into the problem. However justified by pornographic or indecent publication, it sets up a bad precedent and borders on the methods, practices and dictatorial tyranny of the police state. Charges of obscenity can be the entering wedge. Next it could be treason or any unconventional idea, a revolutionary concept such as evolution, or some new discovery of knowledge. (Remember Galileo?)

It all ties in with the present dangerous facility with which innocent persons can be ruined by the malicious or irresponsible. A thoroughly patriotic man or woman may have a career of value to the whole country blasted by simply being labelled "Communist". We are easily confused and blinded to realities today by high powered publicity. Name-calling by those with undemocratic motives, can be a far greater danger to our ideals of Americanism than live bullets. Writers especially face an occupational hazard to such a sinful danger.

STORY OF A WRITER WITH COURAGE

HOME PRAYERS, Rev. Allen W. Clark, Calvary Church, Denver, Mass., a very readable and inspiring service for shut-ins, contained a letter by Robert Louis Stevenson recently. It should lift the spirits of every writer, who is downcast. Here is what he wrote from his South Sea island in 1893. "For fourteen years I have not had one day of real health. I have wakened sick and have gone to my bed weary, and yet I have done my work unflinchingly. I have written my books in bed & out of bed, written them when I was torn by the coughing, written them during hemorrhages & written them when my head swam for weakness. I have done this for so long... But the battle still goes on."

Stevenson's biographer continues: "When a temporary illness laid him on his back, Stevenson wrote in bed one of his most thoughtful and careful essays, the one entitled 'The Technical Elements in Style'. When his eye-trouble forced him into a darkened room, he still wrote on in the diminished light. When after a severe hemorrhage his right arm had to be bound in a sling, he scrawled with his left hand some of the gay poems now included in his book, 'A Child's Garden of Verses'. And when the hemorrhages finally became se-

vere enough so that the doctor forbid him to talk, he actually tried to dictate in deaf-and-dumb sign language a portion of a book, on which he was then working."

This is not a pretty picture, but it will help you and you and you to fight your battles, when the going gets rough. We all of us need inspiration sometimes and must grab at whatever shelter we can from the blows of outrageous fortune. A writer can do worse, I think, than to collect examples such as the one we have just quoted, for use in time of need. HOME PRAYERS is such a weapon. It is distributed free; free-will offerings are accepted twice a year.

EXCLUSIVE

AN AGENT GIVES HIS OWN REFERENCE

A reader of REWRITE has shown us a folder used for promotion purposes by the Daniel S. Mead literary agency, which has been advertising extensively in recent issues of certain writers' magazines. In this folder the statement appears that Mead was formerly the founder of the "U.S. Literary Agency". Letters from this latter firm were signed regularly by the "director", Daniel Mergolies. This firm offered "free readings" of mss. It followed these up by suggestions that a ms. be worked on by the staff and very considerable "time-cost" fees were charged, in addition to the usual 10% commission, if a ms. was sold. This firm also conducted at an identical address the "Truth Publishing Co." The latter was a vanity organization. It undertook to publish an anthology "Truth Cavalade of America". The contributors were to pay substantial amounts for copies. This idea was abandoned just about the time when, at our suggestion, the Du Pont de Nemours & Co. prepared to protect its trade marked mark to show. The AUTHOR & JOURNALIST, it is our recollection if memory serves, refused advertising from the U.S. Literary Agency.

Mead stresses his literary background over a period of many years. But for the most part specific references are lacking or refer to minor activities. We reiterate a lack of confidence in any agency collecting usual agency 10% commissions, which also makes revision, collaboration and ghostwriting arrangements with resulting substantial fees. It can be reputable, but the opportunity for taking advantage of the client is too obvious and too potentially unethical. Reputable agencies generally prefer not to expose themselves to any such misunderstanding. One agent in New York City refuses to charge even the reading fees (very nominal) that are standardized by members of the Society of Authors' Representatives, John W. Rumsey, 522 Fifth Ave., NYC 18. As a result, she doesn't read any mss., except those submitted on the recommendation of her own clients, editors, teachers, etc. In self-protection reputable agents are gradually drawing together, raising their standards. REWRITE is all for it!

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IN A BUYER'S MARKET, PREPARE TO SELL

We are beginning to see again the development of a situation Bill has watched happen at least a half-dozen times in the 25 years he has been writing. Many of the small magazines are folding due to high cost of production. Markets in the more commercial magazines are tightening, with editors assuring contributors on their rejection slips, that they are overstocked. Inventories are being pared down. I saw one note from an editor a few days ago, which said that orders of the publisher were positively to use up mss. on the shelves before buying anything further.

The result? Many persons who are writers, according to their own estimate, are quitting cold. What is the use of writing, if the editors are not going to buy, they mean. If you are a real writer, that kind of competition ought to make you very happy. You will have more room to turn around in. The editors will not be so rushed; they will have a lot more time to read your mss. more closely. You will sell more mss.

In all of these periods of depression the job of the writer, which is to keep on making plans, doing research and writing, takes on greater importance and significance. The trade papers have been reporting that movie magazines are firing all the writers they've forgotten they hired a few years ago. Ditto the story editors, etc. They have fastened down the storm-cellar roofs. They aren't going to buy or spend money until fair weather returns, thank you. Yet an agent sent us an author the other day with a story the agent thinks has distinct movie values. She is looking ahead to the fair weather, planning how she can have her client ready with a ms., that editors all along the line will be anxious to pick up at higher prices than it would be necessary to pay now, when scudding clouds are scaring the poor sailors most to death.

For the ambitious writer these idle times are good times to sort out material, to do a piece of research he could not afford to do in busier moments and to think about things in general that he has not had time for when the tempo of production was faster. Most of all it offers him a chance to try the speculative "long shot" novel, off-trail literary story he has always wanted to do. It is nice to be able to sell the kind of stories that are in active demand. But you don't get ahead that way, you just keep your head up, and swim with the tide. It is when you make your own course and prove that it is practical, that editors begin to notice you.

And don't overlook that these bad periods have their effects on editors, too. Many of them are let go, or forced to find new jobs. And it is in these moments that new ideas, a new look, are most apt to be looked upon in a favorable light. They are needed to build reader appeal. So, try pushing your radical

new ideas. A lot of editors will tell you a depression is on and this is no time to experiment. But just the same, if you look around, you will find this is the time—when new ideas get a foot-hold, when the younger editors start to move up and the seeds of external change are most likely to germinate. The plans and dreams that will eventuate in better times, always get their start in the days when the crowd is afraid to move.

EXPLAINING WHY BUILDS GOOD-WILL

Here is some practical advice to editors. It comes from a writer who is trying to hit markets he has studied reasonably well.

"I wish it were possible," he writes, "to get editors to use something like the slips used by THE OPEN ROAD. (These carry a checklist of 5 printed and one blank reason that the ms. was rejected. It is no trouble then, for even a busy editor to show an author the reason why his ms. snapped back. And at the bottom is a friendly suggestion (a.) to try again and (b) to study the book. Ed.)

"Of course," continues our correspondent, "if the ms. is just no good at all, the kindest thing is to enclose a 'slip' and let it go at that. But if the article or story has some merit, it seems to me only fair that a reason should be given for its return. BETTER HOMES & GARDENS has a slip similar to the one mentioned above. But there is even more to it. Or take the two enclosed from VARSITY. It did not take the reader much time to write those few words, but it not only told why the ms. was returned, but it also gave a better feeling to me than just a cold, empty and impersonal rejection slip. It would not take any time at all for a reader to write, say one, two or three words as to why a ms. was being returned...Well, anyway, let's hope some day some editors will see it my way."

Vincent Dailey

We at REWRITE agree 100% with Vince. But there is something to be said on the editorial side, too. I have heard friendly readers explain the complexity of their duties, and the difficulty of stopping to write notes on mss. they may have read several days earlier and then passed on to their associates. A reader does not wish to be influenced (notes that may prejudice him against a ms. are usually clipped to it where he can skip them until he has first read the ms. itself). In most offices, too, the editor who says "No" has to devote certain hours to the task and clean up a large number at one sitting. But it is perfectly true even a brief word of encouragement or practical comment, helps the author's morale and builds goodwill. It also trains the writers of Tomorrow. And that is why we constantly urge its use on editor friends of ours.

PRICE OF DICTIONARY INCREASED

G. & C. Merriam Co. have announced a price rise to \$30 on Webster's "New International".

REWRITE

THE NEWS OF THE WRITERS' BOOK CLUB

At the New England Women's Press Association's second annual Book Fair the WRITERS' BOOK CLUB presented a small display of some of the best books for writers. (Since we did this after this issue went to press, we will have to file our report in April.) This is the type of special service that we like to have the WBC do, because it brings us an opportunity to talk directly with writers and to advise them regarding their problems. No charge for this kind of exhibit, of course.

The pile-up of good books for writers has been eased a bit by the advancing of the release date for the UNH Conference handbook, "Writers on Writing", to early in May. However, there are still plenty of new excellent books for writers, some of which aren't at all expensive. By the number and greatly increased gross of our sales to date, it appears that writers are willing to buy, when the quality of books is good. Remember that our WRITERS' BOOK CLUB operates very simply. A Book Dividend for each 6 books you buy, & we are still paying the doubled postage—on all books. Your Dividend is \$2.00 in value, \$3, if the total of your purchases exceeds \$20. You may choose any book for your Dividend, and if the cost is greater than credited due you, you simply remit the difference.

THE APRIL SELECTIONS

WRITERS ON WRITING. Ed. by Herschel Brickell. Chapters by William E. Harris, Betty Finning, Esther Forbes, John Marquand & others \$3.50. (latest report is it will be a pocket-sized volume and the price may be \$3.) The Handbook prepared by members of the UNH Conference after 11 annual sessions. Many various types of writing discussed. It is a big book of almost 100,000 words. Packed value.

THE WRITING TRADE. Paul R. Reynolds. \$2.50. A realistic, often unflattering appraisal of the business side of writing. By an agent, a good one, who has lined up well the facts & experience a serious writer ought to have, if he is going to sell. Every writer ought for his own enlightenment to read it frequently.

THE WRITING OF FICTION. Arthur S. Hoffman.. \$3.50. A great editor and a good teacher has summed up what he knows. One professional in a letter to us, said he learned more out of this book than any other.

THE MARCH SELECTIONS

WRITTEN WORD. Gorham Munson. \$2.95. A book developed from Mr. Munson's workshop course given successfully for many years. He is a Bread Loaf Conference staff man. His theories are broadly general, but his analogies are penetratingly specific and well selected. You'll be better educated for reading it.

WRITING—From Idea to Printed Page. Glenn Gundell. \$3.95. The book of SAT. EVE POST ideas (stories, articles, picture stories) in

a step-by-step development from the beginning right up to publication. An invaluable, visual case-book. You see the editors working out problems with their authors. You'll learn a lot, can't help doing so.

ON BEING AN AUTHOR. Vera Brittain. \$3.50. A sound and helpful book by an outspoken English author. Her experience is valuable.

THE BEST SHORT STORIES FROM COLLIER'S. Barthold Fleis. \$1. A good selection, with comments by a discriminating agent.

BOOKS OF PERMANENT WORTH

CRAFT OF THE SHORT STORY. Richard Summers.. \$5.50. One of the best, and most practical books on the technique of writing and being a writer. Summers talks a writer's language. A best-seller in our book shop. Deservedly.

WRITE THE SHORT STORY. Maren Elwood. \$3.50
CHARACTERS MAKE YOUR STORY. each.
Two excellent books on fiction writing. They will last for many years.

STORY WRITING. Edith Mirrielees. \$3. One of the great books and a personal favorite here at WCS House. We would not be without it.

ASPECTS OF THE NOVEL. E.M. Forster. \$3. This is standard for all first novelists. Especially those attempting Quality novels.

FIRST PRINCIPLES OF VERSE. Robert Hillier. \$2. A basic book for verse writers by a poet of distinction. Every poet should own it.

WRITING & SELLING SPECIAL FEATURE ARTICLES. Patterson & Hyde. \$4.50. A Univ. of Wisconsin School of Journalism book. Practical and successful in starting many writers.

MAGAZINE ARTICLE WRITING. Brennecke & Clark. \$3.90. This one is a Columbia University title. It emphasizes magazine feature writing. Its "know how" quality is high.

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